



DSCA Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 1, 2023; Broadway Promenade and Zoom

Board Members Present: David Lough, Jaime Sill, Clark Lauren, Peter Fanning, Patrick Gannon, Bob Pirollo, Catherine Sellers, Victor McTeer

Board Members Absent: Judy Mower, Roger Barry, Ken Shelin

Member Representatives Present: Jim Toale, 101 Condominium; Fran Lambert, Bay Plaza; Susan Lehrer, Embassy House; Bill Diehl, Condo on the Bay; Steven Roscamp, Sarasota Bay Club; Peter Blanton, Ritz-Carlton Residences Sarasota-Quay; Charlie Nagelschmidt, Broadway Promenade; Lisa Schmitt, Regency House

Associate Members Present: Paul Schott, ServPro of North Sarasota; Fred Grady, Aldermam Oaks; Steve Shaw, Hotwire Communications; Michele Sidasky, City National Bank

Guests: Jennifer Ahearn-Koch, Sarasota City Commission; Jennifer Jorgensen, City of Sarasota; Kafi Benz, CONA; Dina Lareau, Arcos;

The meeting was called to order by David Lough at 4:00, a quorum was declared.

The minutes of the October 4 meeting were approved (Bob Pirollo, Patrick Gannon)

Treasurer Clark Lauren reported the DSCA account holds \$2,770.64. Receipts of the last workshop, with 88 people attending, were \$1400, and costs were around \$2000 for a net loss of \$932.

Guest Speaker: Jennifer Jorgenson, Governmental Relations Manager, City of Sarasota.

In introducing Ms. Jorgenson, David Lough noted that her bio sent ahead of time shows her to be well rounded and a good fit for her position. Some highlights of her presentation are as follows:

- She works with local, state and federal lobbyists, the City Commission, and the City Manager, and had recent success in obtaining over a million dollars in appropriations to fix sidewalks and other infrastructure.
- Other applications for appropriations over the past two years were not successful, but they are trying again this year. Each year they develop a list of what they will apply for, concentrating especially on returning to municipalities certain matters recently taken over by the state (e.g. allowances for density, some building codes).
- The Live Local Act has had positive effects on affordable housing, but the negative effects include the state takeovers cited above, and holding local governments accountable for things such as water quality issues over which they have no control.
- Her office is partnering with Mote Marine Laboratories to seek grants for purchasing equipment needed to detect, monitor and record presence in the local watershed of intrusive organisms or materials that eventually end up affecting water quality in the Bay (e.g. causing Red Tide).
- Partnering with lobbyists and with the Florida League of Cities, her office has been tracking the progress of bills making their way through the state legislature, which can be a delicate affair if a bill is not in the interest of municipalities but is favored by a legislator who also influences appropriations. She travels to Tallahassee, and sometimes to Washington DC, to do the kind of relationship building that is required.

- No bills have yet been introduced to address the state’s serious insurance problems. Premiums have risen dramatically, and several insurance companies have left the state. Certain changes already made or under discussion are meant to lure back those companies – such as removing the requirement that the loser of a lawsuit involving property damage has to pay the winner’s legal fees, and removing the possibility that benefits being paid go directly to a contractor instead of to the property owner. So far premiums have not come down, but several insurance companies are going through the licensing registration process to come to Florida.
- Ms. Jorgenson’s office is involved with applying for grants and appropriations for the Bay Park project, progress of which she summarized. Phase I was completed last year, and Phase II starting now will involve enhancement of 14 acres over the next two to three years, including the Cultural District with its event venues and the Art Center. Floating docks, more boat ramps, and the Sunset Pier will be added to the Canal District, and temporary restaurants (e.g. food trucks) will be allowed. Attention will also be given to protecting shoreline grasses and wildlife.
- The Sarasota Performing Arts Center is in the early stages of planning, with the public/private partnership overseeing this project including the City, which will provide 50% of the funding, plus the Sarasota Arts Foundation and the Bay Park Conservancy, which together will raise the remaining funds via grants and philanthropy.
- Choosing which grants to apply for involves much research and careful consideration. Almost all grants require some degree of matching funds and have reporting requirements that can go on for years and involve a great deal of administrative time. Of around 100 or so researched last year only 13 were eventually applied for. A total of 36 are in process within a time span that can take two years or more. As for transportation grants, Nick Patel’s office does their own grant research and writing – achieving successes for such projects as Main St. Complete Streets, partial Complete Streets on St. Armands, Fruitville Road enhancements. Attempts to get funding for the Boulevard of the Arts and 10th Street intersection continue.
- When a grant or appropriation is not obtained, the City gets helpful feedback – which so far has found no fault with the writing or calculations, suggesting that selection is often a matter of choosing “pet projects” favored by the selectors. Especially on the federal side it becomes a matter of lobbying to become such a “pet project”.
- At the County level her office has submitted 14 requests for funding aimed at mitigating recent damage done by weather events and preventing future disasters (e.g. raising road levels where flooding has occurred). As flood zones become expanded the City is looking into reimbursing property owners for restoration costs, or compensating them for property targeted for removal to create public green spaces.
- Proposed changes to Public Events ordinances will be presented at a public town hall meeting in December, prior to submission to the Commission some time in January of 2024. The list is among the PowerPoint slides used for Ms. Jorgensen’s presentation and will be on the DSCA web site shortly after this meeting.

Questions raised after Ms. Jorgenson’s presentation touched on a request that the City should consider doing its own funding for certain highly needed projects rather than depend on state or federal grants, which, as was pointed out, are elusive and come with strings attached. There was some discussion of securing funds for a water taxi service, and for other kinds of public transportation, such as using small electric passenger-carrying vehicles.

New Gold Associate Member: By unanimous vote (Patrick Gannon, Jaime Still), KW Property Management Consultants was welcomed back as a Gold Associate after a two-year lapse in membership.

Parking: The City's Parking Manager, Braxton Harvey, speaker at the last DSCA board meeting, had reviewed proposed changes to the City's parking statutes which would result in higher fees for parking at meters, in lots, and in garages. Concern was raised then about the negative impacts on low-wage commuters, downtown visitors, residents, and businesses. Peter Fanning, noting that Mr. Harvey had said he was gathering input from a several groups before presenting his proposals in final form to the Commission, suggested that DSCA put together a task force to further discuss the proposals and formulate a clearly and strongly worded position statement.

President's Report: David Lough had circulated to board members before the meeting a memo addressing his take on a number of issues DSCA board members are working on.

City Update: Cathy Sellers reported that a new project going up on Main St. across from the Baptist Church will have 230 apartments, 12% of them meeting criteria to be called affordable. Mr. Lough added that the Bayso condominium with 149 units in the Quay will be fully occupied within two or three months.

Associates & Events: Board members expressed their appreciation for Jaime Still's design and organization of the recent workshop on downtown growth. Lots of compliments have been forwarded by attendees and participants.

December 6th Meeting and Holiday Reception: At Judy Mower's suggestion, the nationally known and acclaimed Jazz Club of Sarasota will be the featured topic of the next DSCA gathering. A couple of performers will be there as well, and DSCA board members are encouraged to help defray the modest cost (\$100 or so) to pay those musicians.

Arts & Culture; Greenspace – no reports.

Homeless: Peter Fanning reported that his committee has been meeting with the City's Homeless Coordinator, Dee Dee Jones, to stay abreast of the issues, and the committee continues to work with the Police Chief to organize and launch the new downtown neighborhood watch program.

Transportation; In Roger Barry's absence, David Lough referred to the information on the City's plans for streetscape improvements shared earlier by Ms. Jorgenson, and reminded board members there will be a Commission workshop on November 13, its agenda as yet unpublished, that will review plans for Fruitville and other downtown corridors.

Zoning: There was extensive discussion concerning the zoning changes under review by the Planning Board which are sure to seriously impact downtown quality of life. Among the items of most concern are proposed noise control ordinances, and the subtleties of definitions applied to different types of downtown businesses (e.g. at present treating bars and restaurants as equivalent, obvious "loopholes" likely to be exploited). Citing the confusion that downtowners are feeling as this zoning revision process goes forward, there was general agreement that more public education and input is needed. Question was raised about the need for another meeting to further discuss this topic and possibly plan such a workshop. Also suggested was sending out one or more concise email messages calling attention to the

most controversial zoning change issues, inviting visit to the DSCA website to learn more, and urging attendance at the Monday, November 6 Planning Board meeting and subsequent meetings to come. Consensus was that these steps will be taken. David Lough then reported on matters that had been discussed at the morning's DRC meeting that will probably be forwarded to the Planning Board in about a month. He also referred to recent newspaper stories concerning the "air rights" issue that had been resolved in favor of those opposing the One Park development at the Quay. Also touched on was the Obsidian project – another project where building height has been the issue causing opposition.

Bay Park Conservancy: Bob Pirolo referred to the recent successes and ongoing issues concerning the Bay Park enhancements, reviewed by Ms. Jorgenson earlier in the meeting. Concern was raised about the traffic congestion that will occur when popular events are held within the park, and another concern brought up was about food trucks allowed to park in handicapped spaces – meaning that access to events in the park will be much limited for people who cannot walk long distances from where they have had to park their vehicles.

CCNA: The summit of around 20 neighborhood associations recently held by CCNA, which David Lough had attended as DSCA representative, consisted of small group discussions of the various issues participating organizations had brought forward. A summary of those discussions and any conclusions or recommendations will be forthcoming.

Rosemary District: David Lough briefly spoke about the opening of a new restaurant. Question was raised about the status of the public space called the Rosemary Town Square. David said the developer has been working on signage and lights for the next day grand opening.

Associate News: Brief presentations were made by representatives of Hotwire Communications, ServPro, Alderman Oaks, and City National Bank.

Meeting adjourned at 5:41.

Next Meeting will be Wednesday, December 6, same time and location.